

**NEW ENGLAND GRASSROOTS
ENVIRONMENT FUND**

BGI GRANT REPORT FORM

Recipients of a Boston Grants Initiative grant are asked to complete a final Grant Report **no later than one year** after the grant application deadline. We rely on your **candid** responses to help us assess the effectiveness of our grantmaking program. Completing this report as a group at a regular meeting would help gather a broad perspective from your organization.

Date: June 15, 2011
Contact Person: Aweis Hussein
Name of Organization: Shanbaro Community Association
Address: 318 Broadway, Chelsea, MA 02150
Phone: 617-889-6080 ext 114 **Email Address:** aweish@chelseacollab.org
Date of Award: September 23, 2010 **Grant Amount:** \$5,000

Purpose of Grant: Continued support for the SCA's part-time community organizers' salaries will enable the SCA to continue to effectively advocate and organize to address the unique needs of the Somali Bantu community. The SCA will continue to develop as a committee and will continue to transition from providing direct services to an association that organizes the Somali Bantu community of Chelsea and surrounding communities to become more vocal and civically engaged.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 1: UPDATING GRANTEE PROFILE

Please update the 20-question **Grantee Profile** that you submitted with your original Grant Application. You can either note changes on the original form, or fill in the changes on the attached blank Grantee Profile.

Updated Grantee Profile is attached.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 2: GRANT OUTCOMES

Please answer the following questions about your group and the work it is doing.

A. CHANGE OR ADVANCMENT OF GROUP'S FOCUS/GOALS

1. How is your project progressing? Briefly describe its evolution.

The SCA continues to work to meet the basic needs of the Somali Bantu community while developing the skills and capacity of our community members.

We count among our accomplishments:

- Expanding the hours of Aweis Hussein, our part-time community organizer, and adding Zahara Haji a part-time female Somali Bantu community organizer.

- Preparing for and taking part in the SCA's third planning retreat with assistance from the Collaborative's Director of Organizing; and electing our new slate of Executive Committee members. 22 community members took part in the pre-retreat meeting. 21 community members took part in the retreat on January 22, 2011 a sub-zero Saturday morning.
- Developing a relationship with the Boston Interpreters Collective to present a two workshop series for SCA members with high English proficiency. The first part of the series was held on May 28, 2011. The second part is scheduled for July 9, 2011. Eleven community members are taking the training series. All attendees will receive a certificate and be part of a pool of volunteer interpreters for the community.
- Meeting with the Chelsea Police Department to discuss safety issues, laws pertaining to children and parenting, language issues and the need for interpreters in the courts and with the police. 20 community members attended. We are developing a relationship so that the police will be able to call on us for help with language issues and so that our community can know the police and they can know us. We also had a follow up Police Department Tour on Saturday, March 12, 2011. 15 community members and both community organizers attended.
- Working with the Chelsea Latino Immigrant Committee to run the Workers Center Leadership Institute simultaneously in February through March 2011 for both CLIC and SCA. There were separate and joint components to each session which allowed both communities to access needed information in their first language and facilitated developing further connections between the communities. 8 SCA community members participated.
- Helping 7 community members fill out Citizenship Applications. 6 members passed the test and are now proud United States' citizens. The seventh community member will take the test on June 29, 2011.
- Holding Citizenship Class each Friday morning since November 19, 2010. 10 community members are attending the classes. We are working on getting legal support to help fill out the applications and look into the possibility of waivers for the fees. An additional 10 community members have received the study guide for the 100 questions and are studying at home.
- Working with the Collaborative's Chelsea City-wide Tenants Association and the Boston Tenants Coalition to provide a workshop on Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities for Public Housing tenants on December 4, 2010. 8 community members attended. Note: there was a funeral that same day or more community members would have attended. Also, additional housing trainings were pushed to the summer time. Trainings on Saturdays are better attended and it was difficult to get everything planned into the calendar once the SCA also took on the research project with Harvard University School of Public Health's Research Program on Children and Global Adversity.
- Continuing to utilize Chelsea's Inspectional Services to address code violations in our homes.
- Working with the Chelsea City-wide Tenants Association and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers to plan, develop, and hold a series of Financial Literacy workshops in June through July 2010. 10 community members attended.
- Holding a film screening and panel discussion on the refugee experience with Muslims for Humanity and the Chelsea Police Department's Newcomer Advocate. 15 community members participated. Over 40 people from the larger community were present.
- Taking part in a training organized by the Collaborative's Chelsea United in Defense of Education on "How to Understand your Child's Report Card." 7 Association families attended. An additional 35 parents from the Latino community attended. This training was facilitated by the Chelsea Public School's Parent Liaison. It was held in English, Spanish and Maay Maay. It was very informative and the families that attended were so excited to learn about report cards.

The majority of Somali Bantu parents have not had any educational experience within a school system. They are unsure of what the report card means and rely on their own children to translate what it means. This is problematic. Because it was held on a weeknight, many of our community members were unable to attend. We are hoping to run this training again on a Saturday morning specifically for the Association.

- Working with the Collaborative's Green Space and Recreation Committee (Green Space) to develop the relationship with Temple Emmanuel and move forward with the development of a community garden despite a slight bump in the road when a shed donated by ROCA was delivered and the young man delivering the shed damaged the Temple's fence. Sorting this out with Temple and assuring them that the SCA/Collaborative would use the space responsibly pushed the start up time to the end of June 2011.
- Working with Harvard University School of Public Health's Research Program on Children and Global Adversity to develop a research project to assess mental health needs of Somali Bantu children and families; 4 Somali Bantu community members were trained as Research Assistants and are presently working interviewing community members. 1 community member is acting as project transcriptionist.
- Presenting the initial results of the Somali Bantu Research Project to the larger community on May 12, 2011 at the Collaborative's Annual meeting at the Chelsea City Hall Council Chambers. 10 SCA community members attended. 75 community members attended in addition to Collaborative staff and board members.

2. What factors have helped move your project forward?

The ongoing support from funders like NEGEF has helped the SCA to continue to address the community's direct service needs while working toward developing the SCA as a community organizing committee and developing the skills of SCA members. The SCA is also truly grateful for the support provided by the Collaborative and the other committees under its umbrella. They have provided a wealth of resources, connections, and support. Continuing to build relationships in the larger community also helps us move forward. The relationship with Harvard and the development of the Somali Bantu Research Project has significantly increased the skills of a small group of community members. This is discussed more in detail in the leadership section. The dedication and commitment to the community of the SCA's community organizers and community members have been crucial to continuing to move the SCA forward. The SCA continues to work very hard to not only address the direct service needs of the Somali Bantu community but to develop our members' skills and leadership capacity and to empower our whole community.

3. What obstacles still stand between your group and achieving "success?"

Those issues that are specifically tied to our history and our long journey to find a home here in the United States continue to be obstacles. The needs of the Somali Bantu community are great. The SCA continues to work in the areas that we identified as posing significant challenges specifically: translators/language, housing, jobs and childcare, an after school program, and citizenship and immigration issues as well as accessing healthcare. Limited English oral and written proficiency continue to be barriers in all of these areas.

Additional obstacles are addressed in the community changes section.

B. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

1. Have members of your group become more active in other community activities or organizations since you began your project? If so, in what ways?

The SCA began developing a research project with Harvard University School of Public Health's Research Program on Children and Global Adversity (Harvard) to assess mental health needs of Somali Bantu children and families as part of their adjustment to their new home. It was important that the project be a true partnership that benefitted both the Somali Bantu community and Harvard. The project was designed to have a series of different interviews with community members to assess the community's needs and strengths. They include Free List, Key Informant, Focus Group and if time and money permit Family interviews. As the Free List interview process casts a broad net to capture as much information as possible, it was agreed that Harvard would write up a Community Needs Assessment based on those interviews. The SCA hopes to use this research to develop community organizing campaigns with the Collaborative's support, and to also use the assessment to support funding requests to continue to support the SCA's necessary work. The targeted research of the other interviewing formats may be used to gain specific direct service supports for the community around the mental health needs of children and families.

As Somali Bantu community members would be trained to do the interviews and supported by Harvard staff and students, the SCA also saw this as a capacity building opportunity for community members who had higher level skills. 4 Somali Bantu community members were trained as Research Assistants and are presently working interviewing community members in the Focus Group stage. 1 community member is acting as project transcriptionist translating the Key Informant Interviews from Maay Maay to English. There are also a group of Somali Bantu community members functioning as a community advisory board for the research. The Somali Bantu team members and Harvard's primary investigator, Professor Theresa Betancort presented the initial results of the research at the Collaborative's Annual Meeting. This was very well received by the larger community. Additionally, we are very proud that 2 of the research assistants and one of the Community Advisory Board members were elected to the SCA's Executive Committee in January 2011. Almost all of the Somali Bantu Harvard Team members took part in NEGEF's trainings. We feel that the project has truly helped to build the leadership skills of community members. It has also led to many community members thinking about what the strengths and needs of the community itself are. A copy of the power point from the Annual Meeting presentation is attached. As soon as the Community Needs Statement is finished, we will forward a copy to NEGEF.

2. Did the experience with this group make you and/or other group members more politically active at any level? If so, at what level: local, state, regional?

As noted above, seven community members applied for citizenship. Six community members have passed the test and one community member will take the test at the end of June. Ten community members have been studying for the Citizenship test weekly with Aweis. We are making sure that all new citizens are registering to vote. The Collaborative's Chelsea Voter Initiative will be holding training on government systems, voting and voting rights for those who are new citizens.

As we have had two community organizers, this has allowed Aweis to continue to focus on addressing direct service needs while Zahara has had time to attend direct public actions, legislative

speak outs and advocacy meetings at the Massachusetts State House with other Collaborative committees to start to learn about these aspects of community organizing.

C. COMMUNITY CHANGES

1. In your opinion, have you and/or group members significantly increased their knowledge of any of the following: environmental justice, environmental health, greenspace issues, how your community works or how to solve problems locally?

SCA members have increased their knowledge around environmental health and environmental justice particularly as it relates to housing and one's work environment. Through the Tenants Rights and Responsibilities Training, SCA members learned about the issue of lead paint and accessing Inspectional Services for this and other health hazards. They also learned about the health hazards associated with rodents and bugs, air circulation, mold and other safety hazards and how to address them. Through the health and safety component of the Leadership Institute co-facilitated by CLIC and OSHA, SCA members learned about workplace chemical hazards, OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard, container labeling, and material safety data sheets, employer responsibilities, how to minimize workplace hazards and their rights regarding workplace health and safety.

Please also see section C number 2 below for issues around open space, the ability to grow one's own food and health issues.

Regarding learning more about how our community works, we have been learning and reflecting on the challenge of moving from providing direct services to community organizing. Through the Somali Bantu Research Project with Harvard, we have been talking to each other about our strengths and our needs. Because our community's journey to the United States has been in 3 segments, community members have vastly different life experiences. There are older adult community members who remember Somalia and the life we led there. They also know of the refugee camps. There are younger adults who only remember life in the Kenyan refugee camps. There are now teenagers and children who only remember or know life in the United States. Living in Somalia meant being relegated to second class citizenship and never being part of the society, but you were able to eke out a living. Being in the refugee camps is living in a state of detainment. The camps are set in rural areas away from urban centers. You are not allowed to leave. You are not allowed to find a job. You are dependent on aid. You are close enough to the border that you are still subject to raids at night. This means what you are given during the day may be taken away at night. You depended on aid agencies to assist you for the 12 to 15 years you lived in the camps. When you arrive in the United States, you were provided with a brief period of support which does not really allow you the time to acquire the necessary skills to adjust, to acclimate to your new home. Community members are again dependent on aid to survive. Public housing and food stamps are essential. Community organizing is a shift or a reframing of mentality from trying to find out what aid agencies can do for you to doing for yourself and your community.

We also see this long journey as significantly impacting cultural loss within our community. We have older community members with no oral proficiency and no literacy in English and only oral proficiency in Maay Maay. We have young adults and teens who have limited oral proficiency in English and Maay Maay and only limited proficiency for either reading or writing English. We have some younger children who do not really know Maay Maay. We do not have a Madrassa, religious school, here so there is a significant loss of culture in this area as well. We have found in our Somali

Bantu Research project a significant divide growing between the elders of the community and the youth. Still we see that all community members see the community as a place of support and help so we are hopeful, and we work to solve these problems through the SCA.

2. Since the group's formation, have other local environmental issues received community attention and sparked other community activism? If so, what issues?

The SCA has been working on building a relationship with Temple Emmanuel because of the lack of green space, open space and the ability to have a garden. We are moving forward slowly but surely with a relationship with Temple Emmanuel and the development of a community garden. Community members will begin to garden at the end of June. Enabling 6-9 SCA families to reconnect with our roots, convey our community knowledge to our youth, and contribute economically by helping to put food on the table.

Additionally, community members are starting to connect issues with open space and the ability to grow one's own food with health issues connected to the accessibility and cheapness of unhealthy or less healthy food choices here in the United States. Community members have expressed significant concern over weight gain and health issues that have been tied to their new American diets. Meat and sugar were luxuries in Africa. Here they have become staples and a sign of achievement. Fried foods were very limited in Africa but are very common here. Fast food and junk food are cheaper than vegetables. Community members' budgets are very limited. Often less healthy food choices are cheaper. Choosing healthier options on a limited budget is very challenging. The SCA is working with Mass General Hospital's Healthy Chelsea Initiative to develop a series of healthy nutrition workshops that will also include a budgeting component. With the Collaborative's Green Space, they will also take part in the construction of a new park and community garden in Chelsea this summer. The garden is to be an educational space for community youth and agencies. As it is in the planning stages presently and will be "built" on an empty lot this summer, the new educational garden won't be up and running until next gardening season. However, both Green Space and SCA are hopeful that the SCA will be utilizing the space to help with education about healthy food choices.

D. NEGEF'S IMPACT ON GROUP'S WORK

1. Although it's hard to quantify, please tell us if and how NEGEF's grant and support made a difference to your group and its work. If you had not received the grant from NEGEF, what difference, if any, would it have made to your project?

The SCA has detailed many accomplishments above. NEGEF shares in every one of these accomplishments. NEGEF's support enabled us to maintain two part-time community organizers. Having two community organizers has improved our ability to provide desperately needed direct service assistance while working on trainings and projects to specifically build community members skills, the SCA's capacity, and to take more steps toward community organizing. It was also instrumental in helping us to obtain/maintain funding from other funders. Without NEGEF's support we would not be moving forward as we are. NEGEF workshops helped build both our knowledge base and our skills; we will take what we have learned and share them with our community members further spreading the impact of your support. We are truly grateful for all that you do.

2. What additional skills, information, trainings would help advance your project?

Workers rights, tenants' rights and responsibilities, financial literacy, citizenship, cultural differences particularly around parenting, understanding the school system, safety issues and continuing to develop the relationship with the police department, and understanding and navigating systems continue to be necessary and will be presented to support advancing our members skills and the SCA's capacity. We will also begin to look at the process to become certified as home daycare provider to provide community based childcare. English classes/tutoring and computer trainings would greatly help the community as well. We will also be talking with the Collaborative about media training and possibly garnering more attention for our community's needs when we release with Harvard the Somali Bantu Research Project Community Needs Assessment.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 3: FINANCIAL REPORT

1. Please attach an itemized expense sheet that shows how you spent the NEGEF grant money.

Expense sheet is attached.

2. Was the NEGEF grant your only source of funds? If not, what additional funds did your raise? From what sources?

Foley Hoag Foundation - \$4,000 awarded January 2010

The Lenny Zakim Fund - \$10,000 awarded March 2010

Clowes Fund - \$18,500 – awarded May 2010 for FY11

FINAL REPORT SECTION 4: NEGEF PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. Please comment about our program and how you think we can improve it to meet the needs of the grassroots environmental community in New England.

The SCA is truly grateful for both NEGEF's financial support and its skill building support through trainings. SCA staff and members truly appreciated and benefitted from the trainings presented by NEGEF last year and this past weekend. Please continue the good work that you are currently doing through both funding and offering trainings to support the development of emerging community groups.

2. Do you know of other community groups that might benefit from our program? Please include names and addresses and we will contact them.

Not at this time.